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NO PLAYS EXCHANGED

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## The Hicksville Bungler



T. S. DENISON & COMPANY  
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Whose Little Bride Are You? 3 acts, 2½ hrs. ....	(50c) 5 5
Winning Widow, 2 acts, 1½ hrs. ....	(25c) 2 4

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

# THE HICKSVILLE BUNGLER

A FARCE IN ONE SCENE

BY

CHESTER A. GRIFFIN



CHICAGO  
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS

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# THE HICKSVILLE BUNGLER

## CHARACTERS.

EDITOR.....	<i>Of the Hicksville Bungler</i>
PETE .....	<i>The Office Boy</i>
HIRAM DOOLITTLE .....	<i>A Farmer</i>
OFFICER KETCHAM .....	<i>Village Chief of Police</i>
MR. SIMMONS .....	<i>Who Stutters</i>
SCHWARTZ .....	<i>A Dutch Expressman</i>
FINKELSTEIN .....	<i>A Hebrew Tailor</i>
EDITOR'S WIFE.....	<i>With a Mind of Her Own</i>
ANGELINA MACMUSH.....	<i>Who Thinks She's a Poet</i>
PRISCILLA NOSEY .....	<i>The Village Gossip</i>

The farce serves as a frame on which to hang innumerable local hits. Local names and applications should be used wherever possible. Do not hurry the piece but give plenty of time for jokes to "get over," and for the audience to be thoroughly quiet before proceeding.

PLACE—*A Small Town.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty-five Minutes.*

## COSTUMES.

Strictly modern. Cast as given above will serve to suggest costumes, which may be as simple or elaborate as desired. Character make-ups for some of the characters will, of course, add much to the piece.

## STAGE SETTING AND DIRECTIONS.

A simple office setting is all that is necessary. A desk covered with a litter of paper, a wastebasket, one or two chairs, with some second-hand auction bills hung on the walls, or anything to suggest a country newspaper office.

R. means right of stage; C., center; R. C., right center; L., left; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

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## THE HICKSVILLE BUNGLER

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SCENE: *The office of the Hicksville Bungler. Doors R. and L. A litter of papers covers the EDITOR's desk. EDITOR sound asleep and snoring deeply, his feet on desk.*

*Commotion heard off stage L. and PETE enters, rubbing his face shamefacedly. EDITOR awakes suddenly at sound of commotion.*

EDITOR. Hello, Pete! What's that rumpus all about?

PETE. Nutt'n. Just tried to steal a kiss from the type setter, 'n she slapped my face. (*Rubbing his cheek.*) Some slap, too, believe me!

EDITOR. Well, how many kisses did you succeed in getting before the referee called for a breakaway.

PETE. Just one—and that was enough, too.

EDITOR. Well, it's all right this time, but don't let it happen again. We can't bother to start the press around this plant for a single impression. Remember that. (*PETE starts to go.*) Wait a minute! We haven't had any visitors this morning, have we?

PETE. Nobody but some woman who's trying to earn a talking machine getting up a club for the Fireside Companion. She wanted your subscription.

EDITOR. Subscription! Gosh, that's what we need ourselves, 'most as bad as we do news. I thought when we advertised to swap subscriptions for news items, we'd be swamped, but it doesn't seem to look that way, after all. Guess there isn't anything happening in this burg, or if there is, folks want it kept quiet, like—well, like Ike Williams' engagement to the Widow Brown.

PETE (*looking off R.*). Hello, here's someone coming now. It's an old geezer with a bunch of spinach blowing in the breeze. Guess he means biz, too; he's hitting the high spots only in getting over the ground, anyway.

EDITOR. Well, you can beat it back to the press room, and remember, leave that girl alone.

PETE. You betcha! I'll act like a bashful man at a party where they ain't playing anything but post office. (*Opens door R. to admit HIRAM.*) Come right in, Father Noah.

PETE *exits R., dodging a blow that HIRAM aims at him as he enters.*

HIRAM. Be this the office of the Hicksville Bungler?

EDITOR. It be, my friend.

HIRAM. And be you the chap that runs the shebang?

EDITOR. Guilty again, as charged in the indictment. What can we do you for? A subscription?

HIRAM. Don't ye get flip, ye young squirt. No, by heck! I wouldn't take your old paper if you was giving it away with a hundred-acre wood lot thrown in, durn ye!

EDITOR. It would appear from the street that you were not in perfect accord with our editorial policy.

HIRAM. I don't know anything about your *policies*. I ain't talking about insurance, but about the consarned mistakes you been making in your old paper.

EDITOR. Mistakes? To what mistakes do you refer, Mr. —er—

HIRAM. Hiram Doolittle of Flaghole Deestrick, by heck! Why, to lots of mistakes. Looky here! (*Draws paper from pocket, searches for place and points out item.*) Here's that item about my wedding last week: "The wedding breakfast, served by John Feedem, was a very *swill* affair." A *swill* affair! What kind of an insult do you call that, hey?

EDITOR. Oh, I see! One of our "i's" got into the "e" box, that's all.

HIRAM. Well, you'd better keep your eyes out of the "e" box and in your head, where they belong. And here's another. (*Reads.*) "Our esteemed fellow citizen, Junius P. Good, is suffering from a sprained ankle, sustained while jumping on his cat." "Jumping on his cat!" That's a pretty way to be talking about the deacon, ain't it?

EDITOR. Oh, that should say "his car"—meaning his auto. That's just another typographical error, that's all.

HIRAM. That's right, try to lay everything on your poor

typewriter. I suppose she's to blame for everything, ain't she?

EDITOR. Oh, no, Mr. Doolittle, not at all. You see, mistakes *will* happen on the best regulated newspapers—even one like the Boston News, for instance. Have a cigar, Mr. Doolittle. (*Takes box from desk and offers to HIRAM, who takes and pockets a handful.*) But the papers serve a useful purpose after all, don't they?

HIRAM. That's so, by heck! Even a paper of pins will give you points.

EDITOR. That's so. By the way, Mr. Doolittle, didn't you intimate that you had recently entered the holy bonds of matrimony?

HIRAM. Yes, I guess you might call it that, all right.

EDITOR. Are you just back from your honeymoon?

HIRAM. Yes, just got back three days ago. We went to Bosting.

EDITOR. You had an enjoyable trip, I hope.

HIRAM. Waal, yes, we did and we didn't. Them city sharpers is sharp, all right.

EDITOR. How so?

HIRAM. Waal, they had a sign in our room, "Don't blow out the gas," and then they charged me extra because I burned it all night.

EDITOR. Gas? I thought all the Boston hotels had electric lights nowadays.

HIRAM. This one had three kinds of lights.

EDITOR. Three?

HIRAM. Yes, they had gaslight in the bedrooms, and electric light in the eating room, and an Israelite in the office.

EDITOR. I trust you secured a comfortable room.

HIRAM. Yes, I says to the clerk, "I want the best room in the house for me and my wife." He says, "Suite?" I says, "Yes, sir, she is, but it ain't any of your business."

EDITOR. Well well; how about the feed they gave you? Was that all right?

HIRAM. Yes, mostly. They had some durned funny

looking cheese on the table, though. Waiter said it was called Swiss cheese.

EDITOR. Yes, I know. All full of holes, wasn't it?

HIRAM. Yes, and it's just as well it was. I reckon it needed all the air it could get.

EDITOR. Well, tell me about your wedding, Mr. Doolittle. How long had you known Mrs. Doolittle?

HIRAM. Oh, quite a while. Long enough to know better, I reckon.

EDITOR. Well, I would have gotten married sooner if I only had had the courage to propose. Did you get on your knees when you popped the question?

HIRAM. Waal, no. You see, Cynthy was on 'em at the time.

EDITOR. You had a big wedding, didn't you?

HIRAM. Yes, I reckon we did.

EDITOR. Who gave the bride away?

HIRAM. Her little brother. The minute the minister finished the job, he hollers, "Hurrah, folks, sis has got him at last!"

EDITOR. And then I suppose everybody kissed the bride.

HIRAM. All but the parson. He says, "At this time it is customary for the pastor to kiss the bride, but in this case we will omit the formality." I got back at him, though.

EDITOR. How was that?

HIRAM. A little later I says, "At this time it is customary for the groom to hand the minister a five-dollar bill, but in this case we will omit the formality."

EDITOR. Well, I trust you have both been quite well since your return home.

HIRAM. Yes, mostly. Cynthy warn't feeling just right, and I had the doctor come in. She's some talker, Cynthy is, and she kept it up most of the time the doctor was there. He started to mix some medicine and she says, "Doctor, you didn't look at my tongue."

EDITOR. That was an oversight, surely. What did the doctor say?

HIRAM. Said there warn't no need of it—grass never grew on a race course.

EDITOR. And what did the doctor say was the matter with Mrs. Doolittle?

HIRAM. Said she needed a change of air. I fixed that up in a jiffy, though.

EDITOR. That so? What did you do?

HIRAM. Bought her an electric fan.

EDITOR. By the way, Mr. Doolittle, do you hear very often from your brother Cy?

HIRAM. Yes, got a letter from him last Saturday.

EDITOR. A good long one?

HIRAM. No, 'twere a mighty short one. Cy was, too. That's why he wrote.

EDITOR. Well, Mr. Doolittle, your visit is proving rather newsy, I'm sure. Have you any more items we can use in the Bungler?

HIRAM. Let's see. Oh, yes! Zeb Hodgdon and his wife have named their little boy "Flannel."

EDITOR. Named the baby "Flannel"? What on earth did they give it such an outlandish name for?

HIRAM. Because it shrinks from washing.

EDITOR. Well, Mr. Doolittle, I'm mighty glad you dropped in. We shall be glad to place your name on the list for a six months' subscription. (HIRAM exits R.)

PETE presently enters R. with OFFICER KETCHAM. PETE gives salute, turns sharply and exits R.

EDITOR. Why, good morning, Chief. Glad to see you. Anything new in your line?

KETCHAM. Yes, a little. Did you hear that burglars broke into Ezra Little's house last night?

EDITOR. No, not really?

KETCHAM. Yes, sure thing. Mis' Little heard a noise in the night, and got up, and there was a man's legs sticking out from under the bed.

EDITOR. Ah, the burglar!

KETCHAM. No, Ezra. You see, he'd heard the noise, too. Mis' Little hauled him out and told Ezra that there

was burglars in the house—she could hear them eating up everything in the pantry.

EDITOR. And I suppose they went down and caught them right in the act—or rather in the pantry?

KETCHAM. No, not exactly. Ezra heard what she said about their eating up everything in the house, and he says, "Well, you don't care so long as they don't die in the house, do you?" But look here! (*Draws paper from pocket, unfolds and reads.*) What do you mean by this item in last week's Bungler? (*Reads.*) "Our efficient night officer, Lemuel H. Tomkins, having decided to devote his entire time to agriculture, he will not seek a reappointment as night police."

EDITOR. Well, that's all right, certainly. I had the information from Lem himself.

KETCHAM. Well, that's no reason why you had to run it under "Public Improvements," is it?

EDITOR. I suppose not—from Lem's standpoint, anyway. Any other news?

KETCHAM. Yes. Fellow got arrested for burglary yesterday, up to Higginsville. Got Squire Cheatem for a lawyer. Guess he was guilty all right, but all they found on him was a watch without any works in it.

EDITOR. Well, how did he come out?

KETCHAM. Oh, the Squire took the case. (*Pause.*) The Squire's bought a new alarm clock, they tell me.

EDITOR. How enterprising! Doesn't want to be late to the office mornings, does he?

KETCHAM. No, that ain't it. He wants the clock to wake him up when it's time to go home. Gosh, yes, there was another burglary last night—down to Wayup's grocery store.

EDITOR. I heard about that. Did they get anything to speak of?

KETCHAM. No, Wayup had everything marked so high they couldn't take a thing.

EDITOR. By the way, Chief, I thought you were going to enforce that ten o'clock closing law. Charlie Yee, the

laundryman, had a light burning as late as midnight last night. What on earth do you suppose he could have been doing up so late?

KETCHAM. Shirts, most likely.

EDITOR. Say, Chief, what did you do to Cutup, the tailor, for pinching that bushel basket from Wayup's store?

KETCHAM. Didn't do anything. There isn't any law against a tailor taking a man's measure, is there? (Pause.) Well, just one more item and I'll jog along. It's about Mrs. McCarty's boy Mike. He is going to have a coming out party a week from Friday.

EDITOR. Oh, yes! And how old is Michael?

KETCHAM. Thirty-six.

EDITOR. Thirty-six! Isn't that pretty late for a coming out party?

KETCHAM. Late? I guess not. It's six months early. Mike got that much taken off for good behavior.

EDITOR. Oh, I see. Mike has been taking a little vacation at the expense of the State, eh? Has he got any plans for the future?

KETCHAM. Well, Mrs. McCarty says he has the plans of two postoffices and one bank.

PETE enters R., grinning.

PETE. There's a g-g-gentleman out h-h-here who w-w-wants to s-s-see you.

EDITOR. Well, what's the matter with you anyhow, talking that way? Send him in.

PETE exits and immediately ushers in SIMMONS, R. KETCHAM exits R.

SIMMONS. I-i-is this the e-e-editor?

EDITOR. It is, my friend. Sit down.

SIMMONS. I've g-g-got a whole l-l-lot of n-n-news for y-y-you.

EDITOR. That's fine, I'm sure. Let's have it.

SIMMONS. W-w-well, Bertie S-S-Saphed has g-g-got water on the knee.

EDITOR. That's too bad. Serious, do they call it?

SIMMONS. N-n-no, not for the d-d-dear boy. B-b-but his g-g-girl used to s-s-sit on his l-l-lap, and now she c-c-can't, 'cause it m-m-makes her s-s-sea-sick.

EDITOR. Poor thing! Anything else on your mind, Mr. Simmons?

SIMMONS. Yes. S-s-say, this s-s-sugar shortage don't b-b-bother me a b-b-bit. I've got o-o-over a hundred p-p-pounds of it at h-h-home.

EDITOR. Great Scott! Where on earth did you get it?

SIMMONS. I m-m-married it. D-d-did you know S-S-Sid Hopkins' girl was g-g-going to school in B-B-Boston?

EDITOR. No. What school is she going to?

SIMMONS. Oh, she's g-g-going to get m-m-married, and she's t-t-taking a c-c-course in d-d-domestic silence. D-d-did you know my w-w-wife presented me with t-t-twins last M-M-Monday?

EDITOR. Well, well, the good Lord smiled on you for fair, didn't he?

SIMMONS. Smiled on m-m-me! I r-r-reckon he l-l-laughed out l-l-loud. S-s-say, I got a c-c-cinder in my eye coming on the t-t-train from Concord the other n-n-night.

EDITOR. You ought to have seen Doctor Wise at once. Getting a cinder out of your eye ought to be a cinch for the doctor.

SIMMONS. I d-d-did go to D-D-Doctor Wise, b-b-but he didn't t-t-touch the c-c-cinder. He charged me t-t-two dollars, though, for r-r-removing a foreign s-s-substance from the c-c-cornea, he c-c-called it. I decided that instead of b-b-being an eye doctor, he was a s-s-skin specialist. S-s-say, did you know Z-Z-Zeb Higgins' dog bit a g-g-girl this m-m-morning?

EDITOR. No, where did he bite her?

SIMMONS. R-r-right on the m-m-main street.

EDITOR. Was the dog mad?

SIMMONS. No, but the g-g-girl was. And s-s-say!

EDITOR. Well?

SIMMONS. Henry W-W-Williams and his w-w-wife have g-g-got a little b-b-b—

EDITOR (*excitedly*). Yes, yes! Go on!

SIMMONS. A 1-1-little b-b-b—

EDITOR. For heaven's sake, whistle it!

SIMMONS. Why, they've g-g-got a little b-b-b—a little b-b-b (*whistles*) a little bit of a b-b-bull dog.

EDITOR. Oh, rats! I thought you were going to give us some real news. Well, I'm greatly obliged to you for your visit, Mr. Simmons. By the way, I'm interested to know if you stutter like that all the time.

SIMMONS. N-n-no, sir, only when I t-t-talk.

EDITOR. Did you ever try to break yourself of it?

SIMMONS. Oh, y-y-yes. I g-g-got so I could say "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" first rate, b-b-but it's hard to w-w-work it into an o-o-ordinary conversation, you k-k-know.

PETE *enters, R.*

PETE. Get into your cage, boss. Here comes a lady to sell you some poe-tree. (SIMMONS *exits R.*)

ANGELINA *enters R. presently.*

PETE (*singing*). "Like the last rose of summer left blooming alone, all its lovely complexion all faded and gone." (*Exits as ANGELINA enters.*)

ANGELINA. Are you the editali? I have some verses here, as yet incomplete, but which I feel suah I can have in time for this week's issue of your journal. (EDITOR tries to interrupt but ANGELINA keeps ahead, disregarding all efforts to stop her.) I'm suah you must have a poetic soul, Mistah Editah. You look as if you had responded to the Cosmic Urge. My poem is entitled, "Spring's Call to Love," Mis-tah Editah. Pray listen. (*Reads:*)

Ah, love of mine, fair spring has came;

The flow'rets peep from 'neath the snow;

The love birds mate and nature wakes;

Now old earth flames with ruddy glow.

The woods are green, the ferns grow lush—

EDITOR (*interrupting*). If you want a good rhyme there, why don't you try "mush"?

ANGELINA (*resuming*).

When love calls clear, why must we lag?  
That's as far as I got, Mistah Editah—  
EDITOR. That's quite far enough madam—  
ANGELINA. But it will take me but a short time, two hours at the most, to finish, if I could sit at one of your desks—

EDITOR. I'm awfully sorry, but, you see, all of my desks are busy—that is, I've only got one desk, and—

ANGELINA. And you will share that one with me, Mistah Editah? How uttahly kind of you, I'm suah. (*Sits at EDITOR's desk, regardless of his frowns. Bites end of pencil in deep thought, while EDITOR fidgets in despair.*)

PETE enters, R.

PETE. Man to see you, boss. Dunno what he wants.

SCHWARTZ enters, R.

SCHWARTZ. I'fe got der schmall pox—(*PETE gives a yell and dives off R., EDITOR hurries off L. ANGELINA, busy at desk, doesn't look up. SCHWARTZ acts puzzled, finally addresses ANGELINA.*) I say I'fe got der schmall pox—(*ANGELINA gives a shriek and rushes off R., grabbing her manuscript as she goes. SCHWARTZ puzzled.*) Vas means das? I don't fershtay. (*Waits a moment, undecided, and then exits slowly, R.*)

EDITOR enters cautiously, L., PETE at same time R. They see each other, dodge back, then re-enter and show relief at SCHWARTZ' absence.

EDITOR. Gee whizz, Pete, don't let that old geezer in here again. I don't know but you'd better go out and get vaccinated, anyhow.

PETE. Oh, that's all right. Maw says I'm too slow to catch anything. (*Looking out R.*) Gee, here comes another skirt. More poe-tree, I'll bet. (*Opening door.*) Come right in, lady, we're glad to see you, I'm sure. (*Aside.*) I don't think. (*Hurries off R., dodging a paper weight the EDITOR throws after him.*)

PRISCILLA NOSEY enters, R.

PRISCILLA. Well, Mr. Editor, I noticed you wanted us to bring in news items, and I guess I can give you enough to keep you going for a while. In the first place, just as I was a-coming in, the policeman was arresting Henry Hawkins for breaking the traffic laws with his car.

EDITOR. What, Hawkins speeding in that old wreck of a bus!

PRISCILLA. No, the Chief said the charge was obstructing the highway. That man ought to be arrested, anyhow. It's perfectly ridiculous the way he talks. He admits swearing dreadfully in Doc Pullem's office the other day, and tried to lay it all on the doctor, too. He said the doctor put a dam in his mouth and he wasn't to blame. And say, Mr. Editor, Lizzie Hawkins was down to Boston the other day, and she says Silas Rounder has got an awful big office down there. He's got five typewriters.

EDITOR. Five stenographers! My, my, that's some force, sure.

PRISCILLA. Yes, Lizzie says four of them have got something on Silas, and the other one does all the work. (*Giggling.*) Did you hear about Liph Atwood's dispute with the telephone girl down to the beach?

EDITOR. No, I don't think I have heard about it.

PRISCILLA. Well, Liph objected to a toll charge. Said it was too steep. Why, he says, up to my home town you could telephone to the infernal regions for that amount. Yes, says the girl, but you see this is a long distance call. And did anybody tell you about Hen Abbott's solo at the church Sunday night? He sang "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" so realistically that three of the audience got seasick. And did you hear about Hattie Bennett's little baby?

EDITOR. No, what happened to it?

PRISCILLA. Well, Hattie went to the Rebekahs the other night and left the baby with Zeke. He put it in the crib and gave it a bottle to play with, and it fell out and broke its neck.

EDITOR. The poor child!

PRISCILLA. Oh, no, the bottle.

FINKELSTEIN *enters quietly, R.*

EDITOR. Well, Miss Nosey, I must owe you quite a bit for your work as reporter. (*Figuring.*) Let's see, three and two are five, and four—five and four—(*looking up and seeing* FINKELSTEIN). How much are five and four?

FINKELSTEIN. Eleffun, meester.

EDITOR. Five and four are eleven—no, no, that isn't right. How much are four and five (*impatiently*).

FINK. Eleffun, meester.

EDITOR. Of course not. Five and four are nine.

FINK. (*calmly*). I knowed it, meester.

EDITOR. Well, what on earth made you say eleven?

FINK. Vell, I t'ought you vould peat me down at least two.

EDITOR (*to PRISCILLA*). Well, Miss Nosey, I guess we can extend your subscription for nine months, at least. Drop in again. (*PRISCILLA exits R.*) Now, Mr. Finkelstein, what can I do for you?

FINK. I vant you should take it out my adfertisement from the paper.

EDITOR. What's that for?

FINK. Vell, I adfertised for a poy, and lookit, mine Rachel she gif me two last night—tervinns, you betcha. It pays to adfertise, yes?

EDITOR. Twins? Well, well, congratulations, old boy.

FINK. You wanted items for der paper. I wanted to tell you dot my leetle poy was gone to Boston to school.

EDITOR. Is he?

FINK. No, not Izzy. Ikey. Dot's der leetle peesness feller for you, meester. Vy, der odder day, he vas a fight in mit Mike Clancy's poy Dennis, and Dennis vas lickin', and I hollers, "Run, Ikey, run!" chust like dot, and Ikey hollers, "I can't fadder, I'm standin' on a nickel!"

EDITOR. Well, well, I'm glad to hear that Ikey is turning out so well. Anything more in the line of news, Mr. Finkelstein?

FINK. Yes, I chust got pack dis morning from Mose Cohen's funeral.

EDITOR. What! Is Mose Cohen dead?

FINK. Sure, he is. You didn't t'ink we buried him alive, huh?

EDITOR. I understand you took on pretty badly at Mose's funeral. I didn't know you were a relative.

FINK. I vasn't. Dot's vy I cried. Mose left more as ninety t'ousand tollar. (*Pause.*) My brudder Jakey, he met mit a shock last week.

EDITOR. A shock? You mean apoplexy.

FINK. Yes. He gets it his bill from der Peerless Garage.

EDITOR. Well, Mr. Finkelstein, I find that I've got to do a lot of writing, and I've had so many callers this morning, I guess I'll have to go upstairs where it's quiet and finish up. Good morning and much obliged for your call. I'll see that you get ample credit on our books. (*FINKELSTEIN exits R.* EDITOR calls.) Pete!

PETE enters, *R.*

EDITOR. I'm going upstairs to do some writing and I don't want to be disturbed. If anybody wants to see me, tell 'em I'm busy.

PETE. What if they say their business is important?

EDITOR. Oh, just say, "That's what they all say!" or something like that. You hold the fort while I'm out, and remember, I'm busy! (*EDITOR takes paper and notes and exits, L.* PETE takes seat at EDITOR's desk, cocking his hat on one side, putting his feet on desk and acting generally as if he owned the place.)

EDITOR'S WIFE enters *R.*

EDITOR'S WIFE. Is the Editor in?

PETE. Well, he's not at liberty at present.

WIFE. So he's got into jail at last, has he?

PETE. No, not exactly, but he's busy.

WIFE. Well, I want to see him.

PETE. You can't. He's very busy, and can't be disturbed.

WIFE. But it's very important. I'm his wife.

PETE. Oh, that's what they all say!

WIFE (*angered*). Oh, you wretched boy! Let me get hold of your ear and I'll teach you how to be impudent. (*Reaches across desk for PETE, who dodges.*)

PETE. Don't need anybody to teach me that. Maw says I'm impudent enough as it is. (WIFE dashes for him, PETE retreats, she pursuing him. PETE exits L., slamming door in her face. WIFE hesitates, very angry.)

WIFE. I'll come back later, and we'll see whether I can't see my own husband without being insulted. (Finally exits, R.)

PETE presently enters, L., cautiously, finds WIFE gone, resumes his seat at desk. Knock on door R. and ANGELINA enters.

ANGELINA. Oh, has the editah gone home? I have finished my poem and want to read it to him complete. And that horrid man with the small pox has gone, too, hasn't he?

PETE. Yes, the boss stepped out for just a minute, but he would like to have you wait for him, I'm sure. Sit down, ma'am. (PETE gives her his seat at desk and ANGELINA commences reading her poem to herself. PETE exits quietly, R., winking aside as he leaves.)

EDITOR enters L. presently, grabs copy paper from desk and tries to escape. ANGELINA nabs him.

EDITOR. Heavens, Agnes, again!

ANGELINA. Oh, Mistah Editah, I have my poem complete now, and I'm going to read it entire. I consider it my masterpiece. (EDITOR tries to escape, but ANGELINA stands in the doorway, blocking him, and EDITOR has to listen. ANGELINA proceeds to re-read poem. EDITOR grows more fidgety.)

PETE heard off stage, R., singing "Scotland's Burning." When he comes to the words, "Fire, fire, fire, fire," he enters, R. ANGELINA shrieks and falls in a faint.

EDITOR. Gosh, Pete, you've done it now, all right. Run for some water, quick. (PETE hustles off R.)

WIFE enters R. and grasps the tableau at a glance.

WIFE. Oh, you villain! You wretch!! You monster!!!

EDITOR. Just a minute, my dear, and I will explain.

WIFE. Explain! Explain! You don't need to, thank you.

So *this* is what you were busy with, is it? (EDITOR lets ANGELINA'S head fall back on the floor.)

PETE enters with pail of water and whisk broom. Sprinkles water on ANGELINA'S face and she revives. She reaches for her manuscript and resumes reading.

ANGELINA (reading). "Oh, love of mine, oh heart so true, I love, I love, I love but you—"

EDITOR. For heaven's sake, cut out that mush! You've made trouble enough here with your darned poetry for one morning.

ANGELINA. I don't quite understand.

WIFE. Well, I do, quite nicely, I assure you.

SCHWARTZ enters unobserved, R.

SCHWARTZ. I'fe got der schmall pox—

(WIFE stands her ground, ANGELINA shricks and rushes off R., PETE hurries off L.)

EDITOR (roars). I don't care if you've got the yellow fever. I don't want it! Get out!

SCHWARTZ. Ya, Pooty queek. But I'fe got der schmall pox from—

EDITOR. What do you suppose I care who you caught it from. I don't want it.

SCHWARTZ (puzzled). But it's for you.

EDITOR. Not if I know it, it ain't.

SCHWARTZ. But it's got your name on it.

EDITOR. Got my name on it! What on earth do you mean?

SCHWARTZ. Vy, I t'ought you knew: I'fe got der schmall pox from der oexpress office, mit your name on it. I'fe got it out der hall-way py, alreatty yet.

EDITOR (relieved). Oh, good Lord! Well, bring it in. (SCHWARTZ exits R.)

WIFE. Well, what have you got to say for yourself and that female that just left?

EDITOR. Oh, she's just a poetess—or thinks she is. She blew in here to read a poem. Pete got to singing and she thought the building was afire and threw a fit on the floor. We couldn't let her die in here, naturally, so we were trying to bring her to when you came in.

WIFE. Oh, I see!

SCHWARTZ *re-enters with box.*

EDITOR. And here's the "small pox." It's for your birthday tomorrow, but so long as you landed here the same time as the box, I might as well tell you. It's the vacuum cleaner you've been wanting so long. *Now* is everything all right? If so, let's go get some dinner. Here, Dutchy. (*Gives SCHWARTZ cigars.*) Smoke up on me. All right, Pete. Guess you can lock up any time now. I'll put in the afternoon upstairs, and we hope we won't have any poetry or small pox in ours after dinner. (*EDITOR and WIFE exit, R., followed by PETE and SCHWARTZ*).

SCHWARTZ (*grinning*). Vell, I guess it's a sick vind vot don't plow somebotty pretty good, ain't it?

CURTAIN.

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**Act II.**—A month later, Jack and Jerry reported drowned at sea. The Terrible Turk looking for Zuleika. The return of the prodigals. Ghosts! Some tall explanations are in order. "I never was drowned in all my life, was I, Jerry?" "We were lashed to a mast and we floated and floated and floated!" A couple of heroes. The Terrible Turk hunting for Jack and Jerry. "A Turk never injures an insane man." Jack feigns insanity. "We are leaving this roof forever!" The end of a perfect day.

**Act III.**—Mrs. Bridger's garden. Elmer and Zuleika start on their honeymoon. Mabel forgives Jack, but her mamma does not. They decide to elope. Jerry's scheme works. The two McNutts. "Me middle name is George Washington, and I cannot tell a lie." The detective falls in the well. "It's his ghost!" Jack and Jerry preparing for the elopement. Mary Ann appears at the top of the ladder. A slight mistake. "It's a burglar, mum, I've got him!" The Terrible Turk finds his Zuleika. Happiness at last.

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## SYNOPSIS.

**Act I.—The Good Samaritan.** Aunt Debby's farmhouse in late March. The Widder rehearses the village choir. Sukey in trouble with the old gray tabby cat. "She scratched me. I was puttin' flour on her face for powder, jest like you do!" Lowisy Custard reads her original poetry and Jerry Gosling drops in to see if there are to be any refreshments. "That's jest what maw says!" Lowisy and Jonah pass the fainting tramp by the wayside and Deborah rebukes them with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The tramp's story of downfall due to drink. "A poor piece of driftwood blown hither and thither by the rough winds of adversity." John, Deborah's youngest son, profits by the tramp's experience. "From this moment no drop of liquor shall ever pass my lips." John arrested. "I am innocent, and when a man can face his God, he needn't be afraid to face the law!"

**Act II.—A Mother's Love.** Same scene but three years later, a winter afternoon. "Colder'n blue and purple blazes and snowin' like sixty." Jerry's engagement ring. "Is it a di'mond? Ef it ain't I'm skun out of two shillin'." "I been sparklin' her fer nigh onto four years, Huldy Sourapple, big fat gal, lives over at Hookworm Crick." Deborah longs for news from John, the boy who was taken away. The Widder gossips. "I never seen sich a womern!" "You'd think she was a queen livin' in New York at the Walled-off Castoria." Lowisy is disappointed in Brother Guggs and decides to set her cap for Jonah. Deborah mortgages the old home for Charley and Isabel. The sleighing party. "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" The face at the window. Enoch and John. "I've been weak and foolish, a thing of scorn, laughed at, mocked at, an ex-convict with the shadow of the prison ever before me, but all that is passed. From now on, with the help of God, I am going to be a man!"

**Act III.—The Prodigal Son.** Two years later. Deborah bids farewell to the old home before she goes over the hills to the poorhouse. "The little home where I've lived since John brought me home as a bride." The bitterest cup—a pauper. "It ain't right, it ain't fair." Gloriana and the baby. "There ain't nothin' left fer me, nothin' but the poorhouse." The sheriff comes to take Aunt Deb over the hills. "Your boy ain't dead. He's come back to you, rich and respected. He's here!" The return of the prodigal son. Jerry gets excited and yells, "Glory Hallelujah!" The joy and happiness of Deborah. "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land."

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